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REMARKS

The drawings are amended to show element 52, per the attached Submission, to overcome a few noted informalities contained therein. New formal drawings, incorporating the requested amendments, will follow once the requested drawing amendments are approved by the Examiner. If any further amendment to the drawings of this application is believed necessary, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned representative of the Applicant to discuss the same.

Claims 21, 22, 25, 27, 28 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for the reasons noted in the official action. The rejected claims are accordingly amended, by the above claim amendments, and the presently pending claims are now believed to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention, thereby overcoming all of the raised § 112, second paragraph, rejections. The entered claim amendments are directed solely at overcoming the raised indefiniteness rejection(s) and are not directed at distinguishing the present invention from the art of record in this case.

Claims 16-19, 24 and 26-30 are rejected, under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as being anticipated by Alfredsson '674. The Applicant acknowledges and respectfully traverses the raised anticipatory rejection in view of the following remarks.

As the Examiner is aware, in order to properly support an anticipation rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) the cited reference must disclose each and every feature or limitation of the presently claimed invention. The Examiner has noted that the discs 12 of the outer clutch of Alfredsson '674 are pressed against a contact section which is shown to be fastened in place with a snap-ring type faster. The Applicant disagrees with the Examiner's argument that such a conventionally fastened contact section is "integral" with the common disc support 7 as shown in Alfredsson '674. However, in order to further clarify the structural aspects of the presently claimed invention, the Applicant has amended claim 16 to include the subject matter of claim 17 to more clearly distinguish this feature of the Applicant's invention from the reference.

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Claim 16 clearly states “. . .a contact section (7) of said common disc carrier (9) which consists of one radially outwardly pointing end piece of said common disc carrier (9); and wherein said common disc carrier (9) is a sheet metal shaped part in which the contact section (7) is an integral part thereof and is formed by a deforming process.”

Firstly, Alfredsson `674 does not disclose a common disc carrier “. . .which consists of one radially outwardly pointing end piece of said common disc carrier (9). . .”. Arguably the reference discloses a radially extending element supported by, or on, the common disc carrier 7 however, the Applicant takes issue with the Examiner's allegation that such a contact piece supported by the common disc support 7 is a radially outward pointing end piece of the common disc carrier. Specifically different from the Applicant's recited feature, observing the only figure in Alfredsson `674, it is actually seen that the end piece of the common disc carrier 7 extends axially past the supported contact piece and merely terminates at an expressly axially extended end.

To further clarify this structural difference of the presently claimed invention the subject matter of claim 17 has been added to claim 16 to further describe the Applicant's radially outwardly pointing end piece of the disc carrier as an “integral” part of the common disc carrier. The Applicant takes issue with the Examiner's contention that Alfredsson `674 discloses an integral contact piece. The Applicant's specification at paragraph 015 clearly states “ It can furthermore be provided that the common disc carrier consists of a sheet metal shaped part in which the contact section in an integral part of the same and formed by a molding process.”

The unnumbered contact piece shown in Alfredsson's sole figure is shown explicitly as a separate radially extending element attached to the common disc carrier 7 by a snap ring type fastener. The Applicant believes that the term “integral” is further clearly defined by the added claim language, “wherein said common disc carrier (9) is a sheet metal shaped part in which the contact section (7) is an integral part thereof and is formed by a deforming process”. This is clearly supported by the Applicant's specification and drawings as discussed above.

Claim 16 as amended is believed to clearly distinguish the present invention over the cited reference which does not show an integral end piece of the common carrier deformed to extend radially into a contact piece, but merely shows the conventional, separate and attached contact piece which is the very drawback to the known devices which the presently claimed invention is intended to overcome. In fact, Alfredsson '674 specifically states that the pressure plates (contact pieces) are separately connected to the common carrier 7. In the reference, this is described as, "...a cover 7, which is solidly joined to the end wall 4 and non-rotatably but displaceably carries first and second pressure plates 8, and 9. . .". See page 3, lines 1 and 2.

The Applicant's specification clearly explains that, "[s]aid contact section 7 preferably consists of a radially outwardly deformed axial end 30 of the common inner disc carrier 9. Said contact section is preferably designed so as to exert a strengthening effect upon the common disc carrier 9 which advantageously takes effect in particular regarding the mechanical strength and stiffness of said metal part at relatively high speeds and under comparatively high load". See paragraphs 041, 042 of Applicant's specification. Thus, by forming the contact piece as an integral and deformed portion of the common disc carrier itself, such a structure adds to the strength of the disc carrier. The mere supportive carrying of a separate contact piece as in Alfredsson '674 adds nothing to the structural strength of the common carrier.

In any event, the Applicant has added new independent claim 31 to clearly recite that the integral contact piece of the present invention is formed from a deformed end of the common carrier as opposed to a separate supported piece as disclosed by Alfredsson '674. Claim 31 now clearly recites, "...a contact section (7) of said common disc carrier (9) having an integral radially outwardly extending end piece of said common disc carrier (9) comprising a radially outwardly deformed axial end 30 of the common inner disc carrier (9) to form the contact section (7)". As at least this feature of the presently claimed invention is not disclosed, taught or suggested by the cited reference, therefore, the Applicant believes this new claim to be allowable as well.

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Claims 20-23 are rejected, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as being unpatentable Alfredsson '674 in view of Walker '043 and further in view of Morishita et al. '743, as these claims are dependent either directly or indirectly upon amended claim 16, now believed allowable in view of the above amendments and remarks, the Applicant believes these claims to be allowable as well.

If any further amendment to this application is believed necessary to advance prosecution and place this case in allowable form, the Examiner is courteously solicited to contact the undersigned representative of the Applicant to discuss the same.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the raised rejection(s) should be withdrawn at this time. If the Examiner disagrees with the Applicant's view concerning the withdrawal of the outstanding rejection(s) or applicability of the Alfredsson '674, reference, the Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to indicate the specific passage or passages, or the drawing or drawings, which contain the necessary teaching, suggestion and/or disclosure required by case law. As such teaching, suggestion and/or disclosure is not present in the applied references, the raised rejection should be withdrawn at this time. Alternatively, if the Examiner is relying on his/her expertise in this field, the Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to enter an affidavit substantiating the Examiner's position so that suitable contradictory evidence can be entered in this case by the Applicant.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the raised rejection(s) should be withdrawn and this application is now placed in a condition for allowance. Action to that end, in the form of an early Notice of Allowance, is courteously solicited by the Applicant at this time.

The Applicant respectfully requests that any outstanding objection(s) or requirement(s), as to the form of this application, be held in abeyance until allowable subject matter is indicated for this case.

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In the event that there are any fee deficiencies or additional fees are payable, please charge the same or credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account (Account No. 04-0213).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Daniels", written in a cursive style.

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